Effectiveness of Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) on Marital Adjustment among Women

Mahnaz Khosh Sekkeh¹, Bahram Gheitarani², Shahrbanoo Ghahari ³,⁴*

¹MA in Clinical Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon Branch, Tonekabon, Iran.
²MA in Clinical Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon Branch, Tonekabon, Iran.
³Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology, Iran University of Medical Sciences (IUMS). Center of Excellence in Psychiatry, School of Behavioral Sciences and Mental Health. Department of Mental Health, Tehran, Iran.
⁴Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Research Center, Addiction Institute, Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Sari, Iran.

*Corresponding Author: Shahrbanoo Ghahari

Abstract

Background and goal: marital adjustment is one of the most important issues has been considered in societies. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is an effective method in increase of marital adjustment; hence, the purpose of this study is to determine effectiveness of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on marital adjustment among women. Materials and method: the plan of research is experimental with type of pretest and posttest with control group. Statistical population of this study included all persons who had referred to two Counseling Centers in Rasht City, Iran in 2015. Qualified persons to enter into the study filled out Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and 30 members were randomly chosen out of 50 members who had gained the lower score than cut off point of marital adjustment (100) and then placed into two test and control groups. Experimental intervention (mindfulness-based cognitive therapy) was implemented on test group and post test was conducted for both groups after the end of intervention. The obtained data from Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) were analyzed through SPSS 22 software. Findings: The obtained results indicated mindfulness training had a significant effect on marital adjustment among women (P<0/01).Conclusion: according to the obtained results, it can be stated that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy would lead to increase in marital adjustment of women.

Keywords: Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, Marital adjustment, Women.

Introduction

According to the theory of Locke and Wallace, marital adjustment is defined as conformity of each of couples within marital relationships [1]. Adjustment in marital relationships would affect different aspects of life including mental health of couples, life satisfaction, job satisfaction, income level, academic achievement and even lifetime and many of studies have emphasized on importance of adjustment [2]. Marital adjustment includes four main factors of dyadic satisfaction, dyadic consensus, dyadic cohesion and affectional expression [3]. Mindfulness is a way for a better life, relief pains, and meaning life [4]. Mindfulness is derived from cognitive-behavioral therapies as important factor of third generation of models of psychological therapies [5]. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) can be taught through a therapeutic protocol to referred persons [6]. This therapeutic method requires application of special behavioral, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies to centralize
attention process that is led to reduction and adjustment of negative mood, control of negative thoughts, reduction in concern, formation of positive and desirable thoughts and emotions[7].

Strengthening of mindfulness is along with increase in psychological wellbeing, consensus, openness, calmness and reduced pain symptoms. In fact, mindfully persons are more capable in management and solving daily problems [8,9]. On the other hand, mindfulness practices would lead to more life enjoyment [10]. As the person learns mindfulness skills, would learn to give less power, value and authority to judgment of him/herself or other people that might led to negative thoughts and response to these moods through kindness and acceptance [11].

As indicated [12] in a study that training of family therapy based on mindfulness would improve quality of marital relationships and frigidity in women. Burpee and longer [13] concluded in their studies that there is a strong relation between mindfulness and marital satisfaction proving that marital satisfaction is higher among couples with more mindfulness. According to the effects of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on improvement of people performance, the aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of training mindfulness-based cognitive therapy in marital adjustment among women.

**Method**

This study is an experimental research assessing effectiveness of training mindfulness in marital adjustment level. Research plan is pretest-posttest with control group. Respondents included two groups of married women with marital maladjustment identified through marital adjustment questionnaire of DAS.

Statistical population included all persons who had referred to two Clinical Counseling Centers in Rasht City to treat marital maladjustment. Random sampling method was used to choose sample of referred population of married women to Counseling Centers in Rasht City. In this regard, the list of counseling centers were prepared, then 2 counseling centers were randomly chosen and then all married women who had referred to receive counseling services and improve their marital relationship filled out the marital adjustment questionnaire during 2 months. Entering criteria to the study included diploma degree, age group of 20-40 and 10-years marital life and then 30 members were randomly chosen out of members who were had conditions and gained the lower score than cutoff point of marital adjustment (100) and then placed into two test and control groups.

Test group received treatment of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy during 8 2-hour sessions. Control group was in waiting list. Both groups filled out marital adjustment questionnaire at the start step and after treatment. The obtained results then were analyzed through statistical software of SPSS22.

**Research Instrument**

The following instruments were used in this study to collect data:

**Demographic Questionnaire:** This questionnaire presented some information about psychological situation of respondents

**Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS):** This questionnaire was designed by Spanier that include 32 items to measure adjustment or maladjustment of couples. Spanier determined the reliability of this scale equal to 96%. Sharply and Cross, Spainer, Spainer and Thomson and Kazak et al. confirmed reliability of total score of the test. Spainer has obtained concurrent validity of the scale based on its correlation with adjustment of marital adjustment questionnaire by Locke and Wallace [14] and reported this correlation equal to 86% [14].

In Iran, Khodapanahi used the concurrent implementation of this scale and questionnaire of Locke and Wallace to determine validity and reliability of the scale through retest and implementation during 37 days on 92 members. The results indicted validity and reliability of this scale in Iranian culture [15]. This questionnaire was designed by Spanier that include 32 items to
measure adjustment or maladjustment of couples. Spainer determined the reliability of this scale equal to 96%. Sharply and Cross, Spainer, Spainer and Thomson and Kazak et al confirmed reliability of total score of the test.

Spainer has obtained concurrent validity of the scale based on its correlation with adjustment of marital adjustment questionnaire by Locke and Wallace [14] and reported this correlation equal to 86%[14].

In Iran, Khodapanahi used the concurrent implementation of this scale and questionnaire of Locke and Wallace to determine validity and reliability of the scale through retest and implementation during 37 days on 92 members. The results indicted validity and reliability of this scale in Iranian culture [15].

The Content of Intervention Package

Therapeutic package of this study was implemented through 8 45-min sessions based the Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy protocol for generalized anxiety disorder.

First session: explaining the content of 8 sessions of MBCT program, explaining some elements of CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) such as cycle of feeling, thought, emotion, behavior, meditation of body checking, practice for beginner mind, eating a raisin with awareness, and giving homework.

Second session: teaching 3 minutes breathing skill (3MBS), teaching being aware during activities, teaching awareness and mindfulness attention (being mode and doing mode), body scan meditation, teaching non-judgmental being and non-critical about self-thoughts and feelings, ranging to watch thoughts, feelings and behavior, checking given homework and giving new homework.

Third Session: explaining emotions, teaching mindful breathing with concentration on some parts of body in which, excitement and tension feels, being aware of emotions if they are good, bad or only are emotions, increasing self-awareness toward body, emotions and reactions against them.

Mindful Breathing and teaching to change attitude toward thoughts feelings, and experiences, and giving homework.

Fourth Session: teaching to be present at being mode (here and now), being mindful toward body, being mindful toward thoughts, doing an enjoyable activity, making mindful and smart decisions, and giving homework

Fifth Session: teaching being mindful in a relationship, acceptance of own actions and thoughts as they are, teaching basic acceptance, non-judge self or spouse, teaching meta-meditation (love and kindness meditation), and giving homework.

Sixth Session: teaching that thought are not real, they are not good or bad they are only and only thoughts, teaching not to fight and having reasonable reaction along with acceptance and kindness toward thoughts, making balance between thoughts and feelings, teaching technique of inner smile, training 3-min record of thoughts, and thanksgiving techniques, having positive view about things, and giving homework.

Seventh Session: being mindful in relationships, giving value to the relationship, sense of gratitude, and release through forgiveness, being mindful and meditation facing problems, acceptance and being patient without side taking, being aware of thoughts and reactions, and giving homework.

Eighth Session: meditation of body checking and a review on previous sessions skills.

Findings

Participants of this study included married women with at least diploma degree (55%), associate degree (25%), BA (15%), MA (5%), and age domain of 20-40 with minimum 10-years of marital life.

Research hypothesis: mindfulness-based cognitive therapy has effect on marital adjustment among women.
Table 1: Statistical indices of dependent variables of test and control groups in pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital adjustment</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>65/09</td>
<td>96/94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>65/68</td>
<td>64/40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is observed, the mean scores of pretest and posttest of dependent variable in test and control groups have been presented indicating difference between two groups after intervention.

Table 2: Interactive effect between independent variable and pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital adjustment</td>
<td>60/96</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30/48</td>
<td>1/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>656/18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26/25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The obtained F-value to examine the interaction between dependent variable and pretest is not statistically significant (P>0/05). In other words, test and control groups had similar marital adjustment within pretest. Therefore, homogeneity assumptions of regression have been accepted.

Table 3: Test of the size of combined effect based on s Lambda's wilk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wilk's Lambda</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>η</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0/015</td>
<td>804/2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>0/001</td>
<td>0/99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the obtained results of table 3, training mindfulness has a significant effect (P<0/01) on marital adjustment among women within a combined variable with ηpartial=0/99, wilk's Lambda=0/015, and F (2, 25) =804/2.

Squares values of η in this table are a share of variance related to the new combined variable. General regulation is that: if this value is more than 14/0, the effect level is high and share square of η indicates this effect equal to 0/99 proving high effect. Significance of the effect of mindfulness training on marital adjustment of women indicates the difference between means of dependent variables in these groups.

Table 4: Results of test of the effect of mindfulness on marital adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change sources</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom Df</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig level</th>
<th>Effect of η</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital adjustment</td>
<td>7578/73</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7578/73</td>
<td>147/87</td>
<td>0/001</td>
<td>0/85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1332/54</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>51/25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the results of table 4, teaching mindfulness has been effective in marital adjustment of women based on the F (1, 26) =147/87 and P<0/01. Square of η indicates this effect intensity equal to 0/85. Significance of the effect of mindfulness on marital adjustment among women indicate that the mean of dependent variables of test and control groups have been different.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Mindfulness is an acceptance and non-judgmental approach to events that it is require presence of mind in current moment and experience inner and external experience without judgment [16]. The obtained results indicated that approach of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy has significantly increased marital adjustment among women. This result has been coordinated with findings of following studies: Barnes et al [17] that indicated...
mindfulness is along with more marital satisfaction and adaptive responses; findings by Pruitt and McCollum [18], Watkins and Krdowa [19], Walsh et al [20] quoted by Gambrel and Keeling [21] indicating that there is a positive relation between mindfulness, marital satisfaction, mature reaction toward relationship problems, acceptance of spouse, and sympathy; studies of Lord [22] that indicted mindfulness would increase sympathy, flexible relationship, open and accepting mind among couples; findings of study by Rajabi and Sotoudeh [23] that confirmed the positive effect of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on increase in marital satisfaction; research findings by Bohlmeijen et al [24] that indicated teaching mindfulness can positively effect on reduction in depression, anxiety, and psychological adjustment of people; studies of Flugel et al [25] indicating that mindfulness-based program of stress reduction is effective in improvement of mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of people; results of conducted studies by Zeidan et al [9] mentioned that meditation and mindfulness improve the mood and short-term teaching of it reduces fatigue and anxiety; and finally with results of conducted study by Goldin and Gross [26] that proved mindfulness would lead to improvement of symptoms of stress, anxiety and self-esteem.

Conclusion

The obtained result indicated that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy could effect on marital adjustment among women. In other words, training therapeutic method of mind presence-based mindfulness can improve and increase marital adjustment among women.

Limitations

- Women were only the subject of this study and it is essential for further studies to study men too.
- Inaccessibility of researcher to husbands of participants in order to increase marital satisfaction

References


